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FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0077

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 DAMASCUS 03087

TERREP EXCLUSIVE

E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR

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SUBJECT: SYRIAN EXPULSION OF THE ABU NIDAL ORGANIZATION

REF: A) DAMASCUS 3020, B) DAMASCUS 3026

11. SECRET - ENTIRE TEXT.

12. SUMMARY: EVERY SOURCE WE HAVE BEEN ABLE TO FOLLOW UP WITH CONCERNING ABU NIDAL'S EXPULSION FROM SYRIA HAS CONFIRMED THE STORY IN ONE WAY OR ANOTHER. NO ONE, HOWEVER, CAN SAY AUTHORITATIVELY THAT THE SYRIAN BAN ON THE ANO HAS EXTENDED TO THE CAMPS IN THE BIQA' VALLEY. END SUMMARY.

13. POST HAS DONE EVERYTHING POSSIBLE TO FOLLOW UP INITIAL REPORTS THAT THE SYRIAN GOVERNMENT HAS EXPELLED THE ABU NIDAL ORGANIZATION FROM ITS TERRITORY. EVERY SOURCE WE HAVE BEEN ABLE TO CONTACT IN THE PAST TWO DAYS HAS SAID THE SAME THING: THE ANO IS GONE.

14. POLOFF SPOKE WITH LEBANESE BA'TH PARTY LEADER QANSUH JUNE 7 WHO STATED UNEQUIVOCALLY THAT THE SYRIANS HAVE EXPELLED THE ANO. QANSUH SAID QADHAFI HAD SENT A SENIOR EMISSARY TO GET THE EXPULSION ORDER REVERSED OR DELAYED, BUT ASAD HAD REJECTED THE APPEAL. MICHEL SAMAHA TOLD POLOFF THE SAME DAY THAT HE HAD JUST COME FROM MEETINGS WITH KHADDAM, SHARA', AND KHOULI, ALL OF WHOM CONFIRMED THE ANO HAD BEEN OUSTED, ADDING THAT THIS WAS A POLITICAL DECISION TAKEN "A MONTH AGO" BUT EXECUTED AT A MOMENT (JUST BEFORE THE VENICE SUMMIT) TO MAXIMIZE ITS PROPAGANDA VALUE IN THE WEST.

15. AUSTRALIAN EMBASSY OFFICERS HAVE TALKED WITH PNSF CHAIRMAN KHALID AL-FAHOM, PNSF INDEPENDENT SHAHABI, AND A MEMBER OF THE PFLP POLITBURO. ALL THREE PALESTINIAN SOURCES TOLD THE AUSTRALIANS PRACTICALLY THE SAME THING: ABU NIDAL IS OUT. THE ONE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE THREE PALESTINIANS WAS THAT FAHOM INDICATED THAT A FEW ANO MEMBERS REMAIN IN DAMASCUS TAKING CARE OF LAST MINUTE TRANSPORTATION DETAILS, BUT THAT THEY TOO WILL BE GONE BY FRIDAY, JUNE 15. THE OTHER SOURCES SAID THOSE ANO MEMBERS NOT HOLDING SYRIAN DOCUMENTATION WERE ALREADY GONE. THE AUSTRALIANS' PALESTINIAN CONTACTS ELABORATED ON THE QUESTION OF "SYRIAN DOCUMENTATION." THOSE ANO MEMBERS WHO HOLD THE PALESTINIAN IDENTITY DOCUMENTS NORMALLY ISSUED BY THE SYRIAN GOVERNMENT TO PALESTINIANS ARE PERMITTED TO STAY. THESE ARE BASICALLY REFUGEES WHO ARRIVED IN SYRIA IN 1948 AND THEIR CHILDREN WHO WERE BORN IN SYRIA. PERMISSION TO STAY APPARENTLY DOES NOT EXTEND TO ANO MEMBERS WHO HAVE RECEIVED SYRIAN PASSPORTS IN THE COURSE OF THEIR ANO "DUTIES." THOSE ANO MEMBERS WHO DO REMAIN ARE ABSOLUTELY PROHIBITED FROM ENGAGING IN ANO ACTIVITIES. THEY WILL LIKELY BE CLOSELY WATCHED AND, IF ARRESTED FOR ANY VIOLATIONS, WILL BE TREATED AS ORDINARY SYRIAN CITIZENS. THESE PALESTINIAN SOURCES, FINALLY, SUGGEST THE REASONS FOR THE SARG'S DECISION RELATE TO THE DESIRE TO RELIEVE WESTERN PRESSURES REGARDING TERRORISM AS WELL AS REFLECT SYRIAN WRATH OVER ABU NIDAL'S MEETING WITH FATAH LEADERS IN ALGIERS.

16. YUGOSLAV DCM REPORTED THAT TWO "RESPONSIBLE" PALESTINIAN OFFICIALS (WHOM HE OTHERWISE DECLINED TO IDENTIFY), HAVE ALSO INSISTED THE ANO HAS LEFT SYRIA. LIKE THE AUSTRALIANS' SOURCES, THE YUGOSLAV'S CONTACTS SAY THAT MOST HAVE GONE DIRECTLY TO LIBYA, WITH A FEW TO ALGIERS. THE YUGOSLAV TOLD US THAT HIS SOURCES SAY THE REAL REASON FOR THE SARG'S IMMEDIATE WRATH WAS THAT SYRIA INTELLIGENCE HAD "CAUGHT" ANO OPERATIVES "SPYING" ON SYRIA.

17. THE BRITISH EMBASSY HAS ALSO TOLD US THAT RELIABLE PALESTINIAN CONTACTS HAVE CONFIRMED THE ANO'S OUSTER AND DEPARTURE.

18. COMMENT: EVERY SIGN HERE IS THAT THE SYRIAN GOVERNMENT FINALLY HAS TAKEN THE "DIFFICULT STEP" TO ELIMINATE THE ANO PRESENCE IN DAMASCUS. CERTAINLY A SIGNIFICANT MOTIVATION HAS BEEN THE DESIRE AND NEED TO ALLEVIATE WESTERN PRESSURES AND SANCTIONS. SEVERAL SYRIAN AND LEBANESE CONTACTS HAVE ALL BUT PLEADED THAT AMERICA MUST NOW RESPOND TO ASAD'S "GESTURE" BY RETURNING THE U.S. AMBASSADOR. THE PALESTINIANS, ON THE OTHER HAND, WHILE ACKNOWLEDGING THE IMPORTANCE OF WESTERN PRESSURES, INSIST THAT DAMASCUS HAD COMPELLING REASONS OF ITS OWN FOR SHUTTING DOWN ABU NIDAL WHICH WILL STAND UP TO ARAB SCRUTINY. THEY POINT OUT, TOO, THAT THE BULK OF THE ANO OPERATIONS HAD ALREADY BEEN SHIFTED OUT OF SYRIA OVER THE PAST SEVERAL MONTHS TO ESCAPE INCREASINGLY ONEROUS SYRIAN SUPERVISION AND RESTRICTIONS AND IN THE FACE OF SYRIA'S UNRELENTING PRESSURE ON ALL THE PALESTINIANS, INCLUDING THE ANO, IN THE CAMPS' WAR.

19. COMMENT CONTINUED: WE HAVE NOT BEEN ABLE TO COME UP WITH CONFIRMABLE EVIDENCE THAT THE SYRIAN DECISION TO SEVER TIES WITH ABU NIDAL HAS EXTENDED TO THE TRAINING CAMPS IN THE SYRIAN OCCUPIED BIQA' VALLEY. AT THE SAME TIME, NO ONE SAYS THEY ARE STILL IN OPERATION EITHER. A "SOMETIMES RELIABLE" JOURNALIST INSISTS THAT THE BIQA' CAMPS HAVE BEEN CLOSED FOR SOME TIME, AND OFFERED TO ARRANGE FOR DAMASCUS POLOFF TO VISIT THE CAMPS WITH SYRIAN MILITARY ESCORT. SAMAHA VENTURED WHAT HE ADMITTED WAS A GUESS THAT THEY HAD BEEN OR WOULD BE CLOSED. NO ONE ELSE CLAIMS TO KNOW. THE YUGOSLAV DCM HAS TOLD US THAT HE WAS UNABLE TO GET INFORMATION TO DATE FROM HIS PALESTINIAN CONTACTS, BUT WAS CERTAIN HE WOULD HAVE SOMETHING "IN A WEEK OR SO." POST WILL KEEP TRYING.

LINO